Review of local self Government institutions

1100. SHRI SHREEGOPAL VYAS:
SHRI BALAVANT *ALIAS* BAL APTE:

Will the Minister of PANCHAYATI RAJ be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have reviewed or assessed the functioning of local self Government institutions during the last three years; and

(b) if so, the details of such review undertaken alongwith the measures taken to strengthen these institutions?

THE MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The three-Volume "State of the Panchayats — A Mid Term Review and Appraisal" running to over 1600 pages has been placed on the Table of the House during the Winter Session *i.e.* November, 2006. A brief summary is outlined below:

1. The Ministry of Panchayati Raj is an innovation of the UPA Government because no previous Government has had a separate Ministry or even Department of Panchayati Raj. The Ministry of Panchayati Raj came into existence on 27th May, 2004, and within a month, Hon'ble Prime Minister called his very first Conference of Chief Ministers on 24th June 2004, on the subject "Rural Prosperity and Poverty Eradication through Panchayati Raj". While inaugurating the Conference, he spoke of Panchayati Raj being a medium to transform rural India into 700 million opportunities, of Gram Swaraj being the key instrument for integrating economic reforms with institutional reforms in the country side, the challenges of institutionalizing the system of local self-governance while also making it the world's most representative and participatory democracy. The fist mandate of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj is to ensure conformity to the Constitutional provisions of Part IX of the Constitution read with Article 243 ZD of Part IXA relating to the District Planning Committees together with the Eleventh Schedule which sets out a list of 29 matters, to be considered by State Legislatures for devolution to the Panchayats. While the Ministry of Panchayati Raj must ensure conformity to these Constitutional provisions, the Constitution of India charges the States (not the Centre) with the responsibility for devolution. In other words, the processes and content of devolution of

functions, finances and functionaries — the crux of Power to the Panchayats — are vested entirely in State Legislatures, reinforcing the inclusion of Panchayati Raj in the State List of the Seventh Schedule.

2. The first task before the Ministry was to evolve a national consensus in respect of the Roadmap for Panchayati Raj through mutual consultation between the Centre and the States. Ministry of Panchayati Raj convened Seven Round Tables of State Panchayati Raj Ministers with the Union Minister of Panchayati Raj between July and December, 2004. The deliberations centered on the 18th identified dimensions of Panchayati Raj ranging from the effective Devolution of the Functions, Finances and Functionaries to District Planning, Training and Capacity Building and IT-enabled e-governance. At the conclusion of each Round Table, nearly 150 action points comprised in the Compendium were unanimously adopted by all Panchayati Raj Ministers and referred to Chief Ministers for their approval. This has become a National Roadmap for effective Panchayati Raj.

3. A Committee of Panchayati Raj Secretaries was constituted to monitor the progress and implementation of these 150 Action Points. This Committee of Secretaries headed by the Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj would also service the Council of Panchayati Raj Ministers. The Committee of Secretaries has held seven meetings. The Council of Ministers has been convened thrice, at Kochi, Kerala in August, 2005, at Bhubaneswar, Orissa in June, 2006 and at Delhi in January, 2007 respectively.

Strengthening women Panchayat heads

1101. SHRIMATI N.P. DURGA: Will the Minister of PANCHAYATI RAJ be pleased to state:

(a) the number of women Panchayat heads in the country, with particular reference to Andhra Pradesh;

(b) the help his Ministry sought from the NCW to strengthen women Panchayat heads in the country;

(c) whether there are any plans to set up State Panchayat Raj Mahila Sangathan; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?